

December 31, 1997

PATIENT IDENTIFICATION WRISTBANDS

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes policy for bar coding a patient's full social security number on the patient identification wristband.

2. BACKGROUND: The requirements for a Blood Product Verification function, in response to a working group review of "system" changes which would reduce blood transfusion errors in the operating room, are in the process of being developed. The group proposed that a universal identifier be bar coded onto the patient identification wristband. A revision to the Veterans Information Systems Technology Architecture (VistA) Surgery software package is currently underway and is scheduled for Beta testing in January 1998. To prepare for these changes, effective February 1, 1998, a bar code that displays the patient's full social security number must be printed onto the patient identification wristband.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that, effective February 1, 1998, a bar code that displays the patient's full social security number must be printed onto the patient identification wristband.

4. ACTION

a. Beginning February 1, 1998, all patients reporting for hospital admission or ambulatory surgery must be issued a patient identification wristband that contains the patient's full name, social security number and a bar code that displays the patient's full social security number.

b. Printers capable of generating wristband bar codes must be installed in locations that process patients for hospital admission and ambulatory surgery.

c. Additional information, e.g., ward designation is optional. If the ward designation is used, it will refer only to the ward identification and will not reference the professional service specialty.

4. REFERENCES: VHA Manual M-1, Part I, Chapter 4.

5. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES: The Director, Health Administration Service (10C3), is responsible for the contents of this VHA Directive.

6. RESCISSIONS: This VHA Directive will expire on October 1, 1998.

S/ by Melinda Murphy for
Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.
Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 1/9/98
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO and 200 - FAX 1/9/98
EX: Boxes, 104, 88, 63, 60, 54, 52, 47, and 44 - FAX 1/9/98

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES OCTOBER 1, 1998